

**Remarks in Joliet, Illinois**

*November 5, 2022*

Hello, hello! Hey, Dick, how are you? Please, have a seat. Take a seat if you have one. [Laughter] I was at a big rally not long ago—last year. And I said, "Everybody take a seat." And the press said, "Biden is so stupid he didn't know they didn't have any chairs." [Laughter]

Well, hello, Joliet. And what a Saturday morning crowd. Thank you so very much.

And, Audree, thanks for that introduction. You know, there's millions—millions—of women and men like Audree all across America who are struggling and worrying every day about how they take care of themselves and take care of their needs, particularly in the area of health.

You know, thanks to—you have one of the best congressional delegations in America, and that's not hyperbole—including my buddy—and he is my buddy—Dick Durbin. You've been there every—every step of the way, Dick. Thank you.

And Senator Tammy—Tammy Duckworth, a genuine—we talk about American heroes. This is an American hero. This is an American hero. She risked her life and gave everything. If I had time, I'd spend the whole time talking about what she did—what she did—defending our Nation, a tireless fighter for her constituents, supporting families and supporting our veterans like nobody else does. And I can't thank you enough for everything you do. I really mean it. Thank you, Tammy.

And it's great to be with another terrific Member of Congress, Robin Kelly, a champion of women and children not only in her district, but all across America. Seriously. When I have a question, I pick up the phone and I call her—[laughter]—and ask for advice.

And your very own Congresswoman, Lauren Underwood. Lauren, thank you, thank you, thank you. You know, I didn't know Audree's story. I didn't know what she was going to be saying when she spoke. But the one—only part of it that didn't surprise me was, you picked up the phone and called her. You picked the phone and called her. You know why? Not only are you a hell of a Congresswoman, you're a nurse. No, I'm serious. There's something special about nurses. Maybe it's because—[applause]—no, no. I genuinely mean it.

I, like many of you, have been a considerable consumer of health care in my family, losing family members as well as saving family members. And I spent a lot of time early on with—myself in an ICU, a long time ago.

And you know, docs allow you to—let you live. But you know, I often say, if there any angels in heaven, they're all nurses, male and female. Doctors let you live; nurses make you want to live. No, I'm not joking. Male and female.

I remember being in an ICU looking at those monitors after a 9-hour operation and thinking to myself—I'm not—I wasn't hurting, I just was tired. I just wanted to just let it go. I knew the line went flat. It's—no, all kidding aside. Some of you have had a similar experience.

And my nurse—I'll never forget her name—Pearl Nelson, at Walter Reed, would come up and whisper in my ear, stroke my face, make me—and talk to me. Talk to me. You know, it's just amazing what nurses do.

And Lauren is the person you can always count on. She's always there. You know, in just her first two terms of office, she got 10 pieces of legislation passed into law. A lot of my Republican colleagues spend 10 years, and they'll get one piece passed into law. [Laughter]

But all kidding aside, you know, lowering health care costs, improving care for women who serve in the Armed Forces, increase the number of veterans trained in health care jobs, protecting America's supply of critical prescription drugs and medical devices. And most of those were bipartisan efforts you put together.

And by the way, when Lauren does her job, it reminds me of what my dad used to say. He used to say: "I'm not looking to the government to solve my problems. I just want them to understand my problems." She understands. Part of it is just understanding what your constituents need. When you can help, help. And when you can't, when there's no real answer, tell them the truth and then work like hell to try to find an answer.

Folks, I've come to Illinois to talk about two programs that reflect who we are as Americans, that Lauren understands to her core—to her core: Social Security and Medicare. I—quite frankly, I've been in the Congress a long time. I never thought I'd have to make this speech. Did you, Dick, ever think we'd be in this position?

You know, these programs do something so basic and yet so important. You know that after working hard for decades, people deserve to retire, as my dad used to say, with some dignity, a word he most often used. Everyone is entitled be treated with dignity.

And the idea that a hard-working person would retire and be in real trouble, deprived of their dignity, is something beyond comprehension to most of us. That's how it should be in the United States.

Lauren talks about people she grew up with, with the people she represents. They are, you know, the—they're folks we all know. They're you in this auditorium; they're people I grew up with.

Imagine a nurse from Lauren's hometown in Naperville, who's been serving patients for decades; she's paid into the Medicare system and the Social Security system with every paycheck. She's getting ready to retire, this nurse—imaginary nurse—trying to take—make plans for a future. And she's counting on Medicare, she's counting on Social Security to be there for her; paid into it your whole life.

Imagine that young dad working in a warehouse in Joliet with little kids at home. It's a hard job, comes home every day; he's not thinking about retirement yet, but one day he will. And he'll be grateful for the Social Security and Medicare, paying for the—what he's paying into right now with those calloused hands and aching back will be there for he and his family. I mean, it's real.

If I can just pause for just a second. I remember my—I was lucky. When my mom was passing away—my mom moved in after my dad died, and moved into my house with me. And it was a great thing because my sister was nearby and my two brothers. And my mom was fiercely independent.

And I remember she used to go up to the local drugstore to get her prescriptions. And I—she wouldn't tell us, but she didn't have enough money to pay for some of those prescriptions. And so, to save her pride, I went up and gave them a credit card and said: "Whatever she has, whatever prescription she has, fill it and say she has enough money and she's paying for it. It's paid for." We didn't want her to know because she would have said no. Pride. Dignity. Dignity.

Imagine a new retiree who recently turned 65. In the past few years, he's been dealing with diabetes, heart disease; he even got a pacemaker. Takes several medicines a day, sometimes as many as 12. A hassle. A hassle. But without Social Security and Medicare, it'd be impossible for him to afford the needs—care he needs.

I mean, literally, you know people. Some of you fit this bill. Most folks don't know their Social Security—almost half of all seniors without it—half of all seniors lived in poverty before

we had Social Security. Half of the senior population of America. Not enough money to put food on the table until Medicare came along. No health care until—they could count on.

And think about what it does to your sense of security. And again, back to what it does for an individual's dignity. We're proud people, especially those who busted their neck their whole life and paid into the system.

But then we came together as a country and said, "No, no, we can do a hell of a lot better than this." Social Security and Medicare are more than Government programs, they're a promise. They're a promise. Work hard and contribute, and when time comes to retire, things are going to be a little easier for you. Not guaranteed, but just a little easier. Social Security and Medicare don't solve it all, but there's a rock—and we've counted on you. It's a rock-solid guarantee, an ironclad commitment.

Generations of Americans have counted on it. And it works. If we didn't have Social Security, the poverty rate for those over 65 would be four times what it is now. Four times. I love those signs—when I came in—"Socialism." [Laughter] Give me a break. What idiots. [Laughter] "Socialism." Whoa.

No one ever doubts I mean what I say. Sometimes, unfortunately, I say all that I mean. [Laughter] Look, think about, in this district alone, more than 100,000 people over the age of 65 in Lauren's district. Some people have means; others are living day to day on Social Security and Medicare. That's why Lauren and I are going to keep protecting and strengthening these programs.

I believe that hard work should be rewarded. And I believe that we should have no one—leave no one behind. No, I really mean it. No American—no American—who's worked and struggled. That's why—that's why—with the help of Lauren and members of your delegation, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act, because it made Medicare stronger.

Look, take prescription drugs. Folks, we pay the highest price for prescription drugs of any industrial—any developed nation in the world. Same, same drug—same exact one—made by the same company, sold in Chicago and sold in Paris, it's cheaper in Paris. Not a joke. No rationale for it. None. And many of these drugs, as a—they come up with are a consequence of Government research. I'm glad they came up with them.

For years, we fought to give Medicare the power to negotiate what they pay for prescription drugs, just like we do for the Veterans Administration. The VA has been able to, as they should. So you want to sell us, figuratively speaking—I mean it literally—aspirin a penny apiece? We're only going to pay half a penny. You don't want to sell it to us? We don't—we'll go somewhere else.

But for years, Big Pharma has blocked us from being able to negotiate that. They were the only exception out there. But not this year. We finally beat Big Pharma. Finally, finally, finally.

Medicare will finally have the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices, just like VA. Additionally, seniors will see their out-of-pocket expenses for prescription drugs capped. You know people. Maybe some of you are paying 7-, 8-, 10,000 dollars a year for prescriptions because you have cancer or other serious disease.

Well, guess what? Because of the help of this delegation sitting in front of me, we capped that level. No senior, and starting January 1, will have to pay more than \$2,000 a year for all their drugs. [Inaudible]—go back. Whether their bills are now 7-, 8-, 10-, 12-, 14,000 dollars a year, no more than \$2,000 a year. And the companies will still make a lot of money.

Starting in January, we're capping the cost of insulin for seniors with diabetes. How many of you know somebody that needs insulin for their diabetes? Raise your hand. Every audience—see that, Dick? Almost everybody—I would say at least half of this audience raised their hand.

You know how much it costs to make that particular—that insulin? It costs \$10. T-E-N.

*[At this point, the President picked up a hand-held microphone, moved away from the podium, and continued his remarks as follows.]*

Ten dollars to make it. That's it—10. With it packaged——

*[The microphone malfunctioned.]*

This isn't working, I guess. *[Laughter]*

*[The President returned to the podium, put down the hand-held microphone, and continued his remarks as follows.]*

With it—they don't want me to wander, I guess. *[Laughter]*

With it packaged, maybe as much as 15. Well, some of you are paying four or five, six hundred dollars a month for that insulin. Well, guess what? You're not going to have to pay more than \$35 a month, period. Thirty-five dollars for one insulin.

So, starting in January—one other thing we changed—starting in January, if Big Pharma raises drug prices faster than inflation, they're going to have to write a check for the difference to Medicare. What's the rationale? This past year, drug companies raised the price on more than one—middle of this "recession," quote, unquote, as Republicans say. It's not a recession. But the middle of this, really, turn-down here in terms of expenses that people are paying at the kitchen table.

They raised the price of 1,200 drugs higher than the rate of inflation, just last year. We're putting an end to that. Plus, for seniors on Medicare Part D, recommended vaccines like shingles vaccines is going to be available for free. No copay.

Last year—last year—more than 2 million seniors got that shingles vaccine at an average price of \$100 for it, but some had to pay as much as \$200. And you wonder how many seniors skipped the shot because they couldn't afford it. You know, we don't have to make that choice anymore.

And we're making hearing aids affordable, finally, for over the counter—*[applause]*—so people—so you don't have to pay for those expensive visits. The FDA estimates this is going to save as much as \$3,000 per pair of hearing aids.

And one more thing. For the first time in a decade, seniors' Social Security checks are going to go up, and Medicare is going to come down. First time.

Folks, all this hard-won progress is because of your delegation. Not a joke. I wish I could say our Republicans in Congress helped make it happen. But the truth is, every single solitary Democrat in Congress voted for the Inflation Reduction Act. Every single Republican voted against it. Every single one. Not one supported it.

And now Republicans are calling to tell us their number-one priority to repeal—is to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act. Everything I just talked about—\$2,000 cap on—\$2,000 cap on prescription drugs; \$35-a-month cap on insulin; more power for Medicare to lower drug prices—all gone. All gone if they succeed. Well, they're not going to succeed, at least for the next 2, because I'll veto it. But—*[laughter]*.

But you know, savings in health care premiums—\$800 a month for Americans on the Affordable Care Act, which Lauren worked so hard to get done—will be gone.

And of course, there's still the repeal of the Affordable Care Act they're trying to do. The Affordable Care Act is the only reason why tens of millions of people have any coverage because of a preexisting condition. They can't get insurance other than through the Affordable Care Act.

And, folks, they're also coming for your Social Security and Medicare.

Rick Scott, a Senator from Florida, is in charge of electing Republicans in the Senate, put out a plan that replaces—places Social Security and Medicare on the chopping block every 5 years. Every 5 years. And that means, every 5 years, Congress is going to have to vote to cut, completely eliminate, or keep it as it is.

This is their little—this is Scott's Republican platform they put out.

*[The President pulled a brochure from the podium.]*

Let me read from it: "All Federal legislation sunsets every 5 years. If the law is worth keeping, Congress can pass it again." So every 5 years, you're going to have to vote on whether we're going to have Social Security anymore—you're—or cut it, whatever. Every 5 years.

I mean, what is with these guys? Same with Medicare. In other words, it goes out of existence if we don't vote to keep it. Isn't that wonderful?

And then along came Ron Johnson—*[laughter]*—Senator Johnson from the State of Wisconsin. He thinks waiting every 5 years to try to eliminate Social Security is too long. He thinks Social Security and Medicare should be on the chopping block every single year, along with veterans benefits and everything else in the Federal budget. If Congress doesn't vote to keep it, it goes away. It's gone.

You've been paying for this your whole life. Now these guys want to take it away. Who in the hell do they think they are? I really mean it. Think about it. I mean, they're saying it out loud. Did you ever hear, Dick—you think, anybody, that they'd be saying this? We knew where their heart was, but the idea.

And what do Republicans want to spend that money on instead? Well, what they want to do—they're really upset with Dick and all of us for making sure that the 55 Fortune 500 companies that paid zero in tax now have to pay a horrible 15 percent in tax.

Well, I want to go back—I want to go back here. Look, think about it. Think of what these guys—they want to—they want to make the tax cut that they voted under the last President, that they didn't pay for a penny of it—not a penny of it—they want to make it permanent. They want to continue—they want to slash the number of agents that are out there at IRS to look at their forms.

They'd allow some of the largest, most profitable companies in America to go back to paying zero. Like I said, that \$2 trillion tax cut, which overwhelmingly benefited major corporations and the wealthiest among us, they want to make sure it's—and by the way, when I ran, I promised you that no one making less than \$400,000 a year would have a single penny in their taxes increased. And I've kept that promise. Not a single penny.

And, folks, many of us are focused on inflation right now, but if you want to raise the cost of living on seniors, go ahead and give free rein to drug companies. Imagine what that's going to do if we see these prices continue to go up, skyrocket. It's called inflation. And that affects ordinary people every single day.

Go ahead and reduce Social Security or Medicare, and watch what happens to the cost of living for hard-working people in Illinois. That's inflation.

My dad used to say that when you—if you take a look, at the end of the month, do you have enough money to pay for all your regular bills and have a little breathing room, just a little breathing, a little left over? Well, these guys don't want there to be any breathing room.

Now Republicans in Congress are saying they're not going to cooperate in cutting—unless I agree to cooperate in cutting Social Security and Medicare, or they'll shut down the Government.

*[The President took a newspaper from the podium.]*

The New York Times front page, top of the—says, "GOP signals plan to shrink Social Security and social"—and it goes on and says, "Congressional Republicans, eyeing the midterm elections victory . . . could hand them control of the House and Senate, have embraced plans to reduce Federal spending on Social Security and Medicare, including cutting benefits for some retirees and raising the retirement age for both . . . programs." It goes on.

Folks, look, we're not making this stuff up. But the real thing—the idea they'd threaten to default on the Federal debt if we didn't do—we didn't go along with them, nothing—nothing—would create more chaos or do more damage to the American economy than that.

Let me close with this: Over the last year, we faced some of the most difficult challenges in our history. We're making real progress thanks to people like Lauren and the rest of your delegation. As I said, she's a nurse at heart. She'll protect Social Security and Medicare, take on Big Pharma and lower drug prices, make Americans' health care a right, just not [not just]\* a privilege.

All of you—all of you—are the reason I've never been more optimistic about the future of America. We just have to remember who in God's name we are. We are the United States of America. There's nothing—[applause]—within our power—that's beyond our power. There's nothing. I really mean it. Nothing.

We're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis stronger than when we went in it. The only one. It's because of who we are. We're forgetting it. We've got to step up. We got to make sure we protect the American people. Basic, fundamental rights that are under—on jeopardy—in jeopardy.

And right now we have 3 more days. Three more days. If you haven't already voted—and an awful lot of you have—make sure you vote. If you have voted, go knock on your neighbor's door. Take them to the polls. Help them out. Convince them to work. Convince them to show up and vote.

And I'll take my chances—Democrat or Republican—if they haven't voted. I'd have them vote. Because they know what's going on. They really do.

So, folks, it's been a great honor to be able to work with your delegation. I hope to God I'm able to continue to do that for at least the next 2 years, maybe beyond that.

But in the meantime, keep the faith. Every time I'd walk out of my Grandpa Finnegan's home up in Scranton, he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith!" And my grandmother would yell, "No, Joey, spread it." *[Laughter]* Let's go spread the faith!

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

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\* White House correction.

One more thing. The good news for you is, I have to be in Philadelphia with Barack to campaign for some folks. And if I don't leave now, they tell me I'm going to be late. And Fetterman is a big boy. *[Laughter]* He's a big—I don't want to be late for him.

But all kidding aside, you have been spared the idea of what I like doing best is working the rope line and saying hi to all of you. I apologize I can't do that today. But I'm like a poor relative: Invite me back; I'll show up.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at Jones Elementary School. In his remarks, he referred to Lake County, IL resident Audree Hall; former Presidents Donald J. Trump and Barack Obama; and Pennsylvania Democratic senatorial candidate Lt. Gov. John K. Fetterman. He also referred to his sister Valerie Owens Biden and brothers James B. and Francis W. Biden.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Joliet, IL.

*Locations:* Joliet, IL.

*Names:* Biden, Francis W.; Biden, James B.; Duckworth, L. Tammy; Durbin, Richard J.; Fetterman, John K.; Hall, Audree; Johnson, Ronald H.; Kelly, Robin L.; Obama, Barack; Owens, Valerie Biden; Scott, Richard L.; Trump, Donald J.; Underwood, Lauren.

*Subjects:* Economy, national : Inflation; Elections : 2022 congressional elections; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health care workers, service and dedication; Health and medical care : Health insurance, protection of coverage; Health and medical care : Hearing aids, affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Health and medical care : Prescription drugs, affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Seniors, prescription drug benefits; Illinois : President's visits; Pennsylvania : Governor; Republican Party : National Republican Senatorial Committee; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Taxation : Corporate tax rates; Veterans : Health and medical care; Veterans : Job training and education assistance.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202201005.